

Message Text

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ACTION PM-04

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FM AMEMBASSY SANA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7550

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

USMTM DHAHRAN

S E C R E T SANA 0811

E.OM 11652: GDS

TAGS: MASS, YE, SA

SUBJECT: SAUDI MILITARY ASSISTANCE TO YEMEN

REF: USDAO SANA 54 DTG 070500Z MAR 76 (NOTAL)

SUMMARY: RETURN OF U.S. 105 MM HOWITZERS TO SAUDI ARABIA
ILLUSTRATES PROBLEMS (BOTH PRACTICAL AND PSYCHOPOLITICAL)
WHICH BESET SAUDI EFFORTS TO START MILITARY SUPPLY
RELATIONSHIP WITH YAR. EPISODE IS ILLUSTRATION OF NEED TO
REVIEW MATTERS WITH SAUDIS BEFORE SULTAN VISIT.

1. RETURN OF 10T MM HOWITZERS DESCRIBED IN REFTL
NEATLY SOLVES A POTENTIAL U.S. LEGAL PROBLEM
CONCERNING TRANSFERS. IN ADDITION, RETURN OF THESE
LOANED WEAPONS, WILL NOT REDUCE USEFUL PSYCHOLOGICAL
EFFECT OF PARADING THEM BY ASSEMBLED YARG AND FOREIGN
FIGURES (ESPECIALLY SOVIETS) LAST SEPTEMBER 26, NATIONAL
DAY CELEBRATION, WHEN HOTITZERS WERE WIDELY INTERPRETED
AS KIND OF PORTENT OF THINGS TO COME.

2. AT SAME TIME, RETURN UNDOES AT ONE STROKE THE MAJOR
EXAMPLE OF SAUDI MILITARY ASSISTANCE TO DATE, AND
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SHOWS CLEARLY HOW LITTLE VALUE THERE IS IN

DELIVERING EQUIPMENT IF THERE IS NO RPT NO FOLLOWUP
IN TRAINING, AMMUNITION, AND CLOSE MILITARY
CONSULTATION.

3. IN VIEW OF IMPENDING VISIT HERE OF MODA CHIEF SULTAN
BIN ABDAL AZIZ WE WOULD NOT RPT NOT BE SURPRISED IF
YEMENIS PUT DIFFERENT FACE ON RETURN THAN SHOWN TO OUR
DATT IN REFTEL. REPORT FROM JIDDA PERSPECTIVE WOULD BE
VERY WELCOME. SUBJECT TO THAT REPORT WE HAVE A FEW
PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS.

4. FIRST, WE MADE REPEATED EFFORTS HERE TO EXPLAIN AND
RATIONALIZE U.S. LAW REQUIREING WRITTEN ASSURANCES OF NON-
TRANSFER TO YARG OFFICIALS. WE POINTED OUT, FOR
INSTANCE THAT YARG HAD ALREADY SIGNED SUCH A PLEDGE
IN FMS SALES CASE WHICH BROUGHT THE JEEPS AND MOUNTED
106 MM RECOILESS RIFLES TO YEMEN LAST FALL. WE POINTED
OUT THAT THE REQUIREMENT IS APPLIED WITHOUT EXCEPTION OR
VARIETY TO EVERY SALE OR TRANSFER IN THE WORLD. NONE OF
THIS WORKED. ASNAG REPORTED THAT HAMDI WAS IRRITATED BY
THE REQUIREMENT, AND GHASHMI, WHO SEEMED TO BE AT FIRST QUITE
AMENABLE TO THE PROCEDURE, LATER SWUNG AROUND SHARPLY,
CALLING IT NOW AN UNWARRANTED INTERFERENCE IN YEMENI
AFFAIRS. YEMENI INEXPERIENCE INCONSISTENCY, AND
NATIONALIST SENSITIVITY SHOWS CLEARLY HERE. THEY GAVE
U.S. (AND PERHAPS SAUDIS) NO WARNING THAT RETURN WAS
IMMINENT.

4. WE SHOULD NOT RPT NOT EXCLUDE POSSIBILITY THAT HAMDI
DID THIS AS CALCULATED GESTURE TO PLACATE SOVIETS, WHOSE
SELF-CONFIDENCE AND AMOUR PROPRE HAVE BEEN BADLY
BATTERED BY THE STATEMENTS OF GHASHMI AND OTHER
RECENT YAR REBUFFS CONCERNING DELIVERIES FROM SOVIETS.
IT WOULD BE CONSISTENT WITH MAN-IN-MIDDLE ROLE WHICH
HAMDI WILL (HAVE TO) PLAY UNTIL HE HAS ASSURED
ALTERNATIVE TO SOVIET ARMS.

5. BEYOND THIS HOWEVER, ARE OTHER YEMENI OBJECTIONS
WHICH TOUCH ON THE PROSPECTS OF THE SAUDIS IN
ESTABLISHING A WORKABLE MILITARY SUPPLY RELATIONSHIP
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HERE. THEY CLEARLY WANT TO MAKE EXTENSIVE USE OF
TRANSFERS AS A DELIVERY DEVICE. THEY SEE IT
(RIGHTLY WE THINK) AS A WAY TO BEAT LONG U.S.
LEADTIMES AND MAXIMIZE THE CREDIT THEY GET
(RATHER THAN LET U.S. GET CREDIT). BUT, DESPITE OUR
EFFORTS LOCALLY AND IN KINGDOM TO GET SAUDIS TO FOLLOW
UP WITH YEMENIS ON TRANSFER ROUTINES, THEY APPEAR TO HAVE
DONE NOTHING. ASNAG TOLD US TWICE TO GET SAUDIS TO

RAISE THIS QUESTION WITH YEMENIS, WE RAISED IT
REPEATEDLY WITH SAUDI MILITARY ATTACHE, WHO IS
FUNCTIONING AS AMBASSADOR. WE HAVE NO INDICATION
THAT HE EVER FOLLOWED UP ON HIS PROMISE TO ACT.

6. MORE THAN THAT, AFTER GETTING WEAPONS HERE, SAUDIS
APPARENTLY NEVER FOLLOWED UP WITH ANY AMMO, TRAINING,
OR EFFORTS TO INTEGRATE THE HOWITZERS INTO UNITS.
THIS WAS A PERFECT OPPORTUNITY TO CRACK THE SOVIET
MONOPOLY IN THEIR ADVISORY FIELD.

7. WE KNOW FROM ASNAG SAUDIS ARE SETTING UP A
MILITARY ADVISORY TEAM AS THEY INDICATED THEY WOULD
DO AT RIYADH CONFERENCE IN JANUARY, AND SOME OF THE
NUMEROUS TRAINEES FROM YEMEN NOW IN SAUDI SCHOOLS
MAY BE STUDYING ARTILLERY. NEVERTHELESS, EVEN IF THIS
IS TRUE, IT WOULD APPEAR THAT WEAKNESSES IN LOCAL
MISSION AND CA RIYADH STAFFING DID NOT RPT NOT ALLOW
SAUDIS TO KEEP MATTERS ON TRACK. HENCE THE RETURN F
THE WEAPONS -- A VERY UNDESIRABLE AND AVOIDABLE ACT.

8 THIS EPISODE WOULD SEEM TO BRING US BACK TO
THE NEED FOR U.S. TO GET SAUDIS AND YEMENIS TO TALK TO
EACH OTHER AND TO TALK SENSIBLY RATHER THAN EMOTIONALLY.
WITH THE SULTAN VISIT COMING UP, WE WOULD SEEM TO BE AT
POINT WHERE A DEMARCHE TO SAUDIS, RATHER THAN MERELY AN
INQUIRY WOULD BE VERY USEFUL.

9. IN OUR VIEW, WHAT WE WANT TO DO IS URGE SAUDIS TO BUILD
UP MOMENTUM IN THEIR PROGRAM BY GIVING YEMENI DETAILS OF
EQUIPMENT LISTS. (HOPEFULLY THERE ARE SOME DETAILS
ABOUT PRICE AND AVAILABILITY WE CAN GIVE SAUDIS.)
WE SHOULD ALSO URGE SAUDIS TO CONTINUE DISCUSSIONS WITH
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US ON OPERATIONAL ASPECTS OF PROGRAM: THE TRANSFER
MECHANISM, THE IMPACT PACKAGE, TRAINING, DELIVERY
SCHEDULES AND METHODS, AND YEMENI POLITICAL MILITARY
CONTEXT OF MILITARY MODERNIZATION.
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